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ABSTRACT

Since television programs portray a wide variety of masculine styles, this aspect of a program may become the most important feature for adolescent boys seeking information about ideal prototypes. The program preferences of a sample of 14-year-old boys, evenly divided between white and black and between aggressive and non-aggressive subjects, were studied. Non-aggressive blacks watched shows featuring vulnerable males, who are weak and dependent on others for help. Aggressive black viewers preferred programs starring tactical males, who are adept problem solvers but whose underdog positions require them to use strategy and surprise instead of force and coercion. Non-aggressive whites liked programs about protective males and their capacity to fill a woman's place in the family. Aggressive whites like forceful male heroes, men whose position allows them to compel others to comply with them or whose characters are so strong that they determine their own lives. These programs, then, both reflect and perpetuate mass culture stereotypes of masculine roles. A boy's choice of programs helps reinforce the viability of one of these styles as a model for his own manhood. (JK)

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FOUR MASCULINE STYLES IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING: A STUDY OF THE VIEWING PREFERENCES OF ADOLESCENT MALES

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FOUR MASCULINE STYLES IN TELEVISION PROGRAMMING:
a study of the viewing preferences of adolescent males

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The influence of television in changing a person's attitudes or behavior may be most evident when the person is already undergoing change. While experiencing the uncertainties of transition, a person becomes active and purposeful in seeking relevant information (**Feather**, 1967), and television can be a ready and profuse source. In this study, we attempted to interpret observed patterns of selective exposure to television programs as an instance of information seeking, stimulated by one of the major transition phases in human development, the onset of adolescence.

Erikson (1968) describes adolescence as one of the eight critical periods of change in the life cycle of an individual. The male, at about age 14, begins to consolidate a sense of identity around the biological nucleus of his maturing sexuality. He searches for a way of thinking about himself that provides a coherent account of his childhood successes and failures, enabling him to view his own life in continuous perspective. At the same time, he is concerned with the question of what kind of man he might become.

> Young people, beset with the physiological revolution of their genital maturation and the uncertainty of the adult roles ahead ... are ... preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the roles and skills cultivated earlier with the ideal prototypes of the day. (Erikson, 1968, p. 128).

To achieve a viable concept of the self, the boy chooses and conforms to a masculine style from among the options available in the society. The definition of manliness which the boy adopts as his own will enter into the formation of his sense of identity. Television programs portray a wide variety of masculine styles, and this aspect may become the most salient feature for adolescent boys seeking information about ideal prototypes.

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe some of the styles of masculine behavior depicted on programs especially popular among teenage viewers. The end result was a provisional classification schema for television programs, based upon variants of the masculine "image".

Method

Subjects

The eighty boys who participated in this study attended the eighth grade of a racially mixed junior high school in a lower-to-middle income neighborhood of Baltimore, Maryland. School counselors selected 39 boys with histories of aberrant social aggressiveness, and 41 who had not exhibited marked aggressive tendencies.

Forty of the boys were Negro, forty were White, and the mean age was 14 years. The design is summarized in Table 1.

	White (A_1)	Black (A_2)
Aggressive (B_1)	n=20 A_1B_1	n=19 A_2B_1
Non-aggressive (B_2)	n=20 A_1B_2	n=21 A_2B_2

Table 1. TYPES OF ADOLESCENT MALE VIEWERS. The two variables used to categorize the subjects (race and interpersonal behavior) are designated by the letters A and B, respectively.

Procedure

Subjects filled out a questionnaire which listed all prime-time (7:30-11:00 P.M.) network television programs seen in the Baltimore area during the 1969-1970 season. The instructions were to indicate which programs a subject had watched at least five times in the preceding four months (the period from September to December).

Data Analysis

The plan of this study was to empirically construct a classification schema for a set of selected television programs. Relationships among the programs were inferred from the degree of overlapping (i.e., substantially duplicated) audience. Our assumption was that programs attracting the same viewers portrayed similar versions of the masculine role. By ranking programs on the basis of shared audience it was possible to identify programs similar in appeal and to form hypotheses about the nature of the shared attributes. Once abstracted, the attributes provided the conceptual framework needed to construct a classification schema.

As the initial step in constructing the schema, twelve programs were selected for detailed examination. Discarded were programs popular among all four groups of subjects: Mod Squad, Room 222, It Takes a Thief, Bill Cosby, Hawaii 5-0, Land of the Giants. Retained were programs more likely to have been frequently watched by the viewers belonging to one group than by those belonging to the other three. The F.B.I., for example, was watched (at least five times) by 80% of white aggressive viewers, while 63% of the others indicated they had seen the program that often. White aggressives were also more likely to have often watched Then Came Bronson (55%, compared with 30% for others) and were slightly more attracted to Adam 12

(65%, others 60%). White nonaggressives showed a differentiating preference for The Courtship of Eddie's Father (75%, others 63%), The Newlywed Game (70%, others 50%), and My Three Sons (55%, others 30%). Popular programs among black aggressive boys were Mannix (84%, others 60%), Mission Impossible (84%, others 65%), and Julia (74%, others 45%). Black non-aggressives were more likely than others to have watched Bewitched (76%, others 60%), Green Acres (76%, others 55%), and Mayberry R.F.D. (67%, others 40%). The program preferences of each group of subjects were thus represented by three different programs.

To measure the audience overlap among these twelve programs, the identities of the viewers watching any two programs were determined, and tallies then made of the number who watched both programs, the number who watched one but not the other, and the number who reported watching neither program. These frequency tallies were cast in the form of two-by-two tables and a phi-coefficient was computed as an index of correlation between each of the 66 pairs of programs.

The phi-coefficients were then used to rank-order the programs on the basis of audience overlap. But this step raised a procedural question: where should the list begin? There was no necessary starting point. Hence, the ranking had to be a circular one which would allow each program, in turn, to be ranked first. Our approach was to attempt to arrange the phi-coefficients to form a circumplex (Guttman, 1966).

In a correlation matrix exhibiting "circumplicial" structure, the correlations are largest next to the principal diagonal which runs from the upper left corner to the lower right corner. Moving away from the diagonal, the correlations first decrease and then begin to increase in a consistent way. This systematic descending-ascending pattern is observed in both the rows and the columns of the matrix. Guttman has shown that a correlation matrix that can be arranged to form a circumplex represents a circular rank ordering of variables. The arrangement is circular because it represents a sequence with neither a beginning nor an end.

A circumplex can be graphically displayed as a circle by spacing the variables around the circumference. Starting with any one variable and tracing around the circle (in either direction), correlations decrease in magnitude and then increase again as the departure point is neared. Variables which occupy adjacent positions are most highly correlated, and thus more similar, while variables on the opposite side have the smallest correlations, and are least similar.

RESULTS

It was possible to arrange intercorrelations among five of the programs to form a circumplex. The matrix of phi-coefficients is found in Table 2 and a graphic version is displayed in Figure 1.

	Bronson	Eddie's Father	Bewitched	Mayberry R.F.D.	Mannix
Bronson	1.00	.11	.02	.05	.11
Eddie's Father	.11	1.00	.23	.13	.02
Bewitched	.02	.23	1.00	.27	.05
Mayberry R.F.D.	.05	.13	.27	1.00	.19
Mannix	.11	.02	.05	.19	1.00

Table 2. CIRCUMPLEX MATRIX OF INTER-CORRELATIONS AMONG FIVE TELEVISION PROGRAMS.

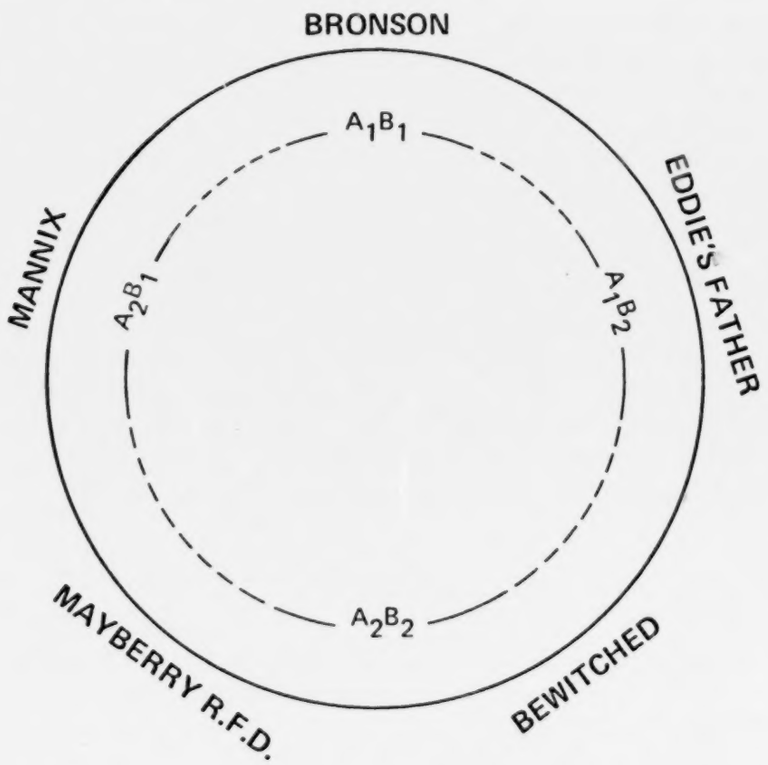

Figure 1. A GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE CIRCUMPLEX MATRIX. Letters with subscripts correspond to the viewer categories in Table 1, and indicate program(s) preferred by each type of viewer.

The differences in audience composition between any two programs were usually slight. The number of viewers watching one program but not another was statistically significant in only four of the 66 pair-wise comparisons. Nevertheless, the shifts in the makeup of audiences as one moves around the circle are systematic.

The action-adventure series popular among aggressive viewers (Bronson and Mannix) occupy adjacent positions around the circle, as do the situation comedies preferred by non-aggressive viewers (Eddie's Father, Bewitched, and Mayberry, R.F.D.). Likewise, programs especially popular among black viewers (Mannix, Mayberry, R.F.D., and Bewitched) are contiguous, as are those programs which appealed especially to white viewers (Bronson and Eddie's Father). The turnover pattern from program to program around the circle is encoded as the changing sequence of letters and subscripts in Figure 1.

The circumplex includes at least one program especially popular among each type of viewer. Other programs could be substituted but the result is a less well-formed circumplex. However, the descending-ascending pattern of correlations is less seriously violated if the replacement is another program popular with the same type of viewer. For example, The FBI and Adam 12 are partially interchangeable with Bronson. All three series were favorites of white aggressive viewers. But neither are permissible substitutes for other programs in the circumplex. These constraints on interchangeability indicated that the three programs preferred by each of the four types of viewers formed discrete, cohesive sets (an interpretation confirmed by a cluster analysis of the complete 12 x 12 matrix of correlations).

The construction of a circumplex was useful in helping us recognize the common features among seemingly dissimilar programs. Each program most resembled (in the make-up of its audience) the two on either side and this relationship implied that adjacent programs possessed some attribute in common. Such a circumplex, linking a diversity of television programs, enabled us, in this study, to structure our thinking about the determinants of program preferences.

DISCUSSION

A male's understanding of his sexual role develops during two periods, each lasting about six years (Kagan, 1969). Before puberty, a boy learns about the expectations and demands of the masculine role through his associations with other boys. During adolescence, his understanding is significantly altered as he learns to relate to girls. The fourteen year olds who participated in this study were at the juncture of these two periods. The information seeking hypothesis proposes that under these conditions of transitional uncertainty, the adolescent male is highly motivated to search for prototypes of adult masculine behavior. Television is a readily accessible source of high-definition portraits of the masculine styles common in our mass culture. In this section are described some of the styles of masculine behavior presented on programs especially popular among adolescent viewers.

Masculine style refers to those characteristic aspects of a man's relationships (either with women or other men) which are relatively invariant from person to person, or across social contexts. The results of our data analysis of television program preferences led us to devise a classification schema of styles using two sets of paired, contrasting attributes. Within this format it was possible to elaborate a definition of masculine style which resembled semantic differential

definitions of concepts. Indeed, the specific meanings we chose to assign to the abstract attribute system were derived from two semantic differential studies intended to determine the meanings of diverse social roles (Friedman and Gladden, 1964) and of nonverbal communications (Mehrabian, 1970). These attributes reflect two different aspects of interpersonal behavior: status and reactivity. The status relationship between two people is determined when one person assumes the dominant role (i.e., high status) and the other assumes the subordinate role. Reactivity refers to a person's tendency either to actively initiate interpersonal contacts or to passively react to the social moves of others.

Permutations of these contrasting attributes yield four styles of masculine portrayal, presented in Table 3 together with our inferred trait characterization for each style. These are briefly discussed, in turn.

	White (A_1)	Black (A_2)
Aggressive (B_1)	high status/active 'THE FORCEFUL MALE' A_1B_1	low status/active 'THE TACTICAL MALE' A_2B_1
Non-aggressive (B_2)	high status/passive 'THE PROTECTING MALE' A_1B_2	low status/passive 'THE VULNERABLE MALE' A_2B_2

Table 3. FOUR STYLES OF MASCULINE BEHAVIOR PORTRAYED IN TELEVISION PROGRAMS POPULAR AMONG ADOLESCENT BOYS.

The Vulnerable Male (low status/passive) is portrayed in the three series preferred by non-aggressive black viewers: Bewitched, Green Acres, and Mayberry, R.F.D. In these programs, a common plot device is to entrap a man in a humiliating situation which exposes his impotence. Too weak and inept to rescue himself, he is dependent upon others for help. The help often comes from a masterful woman. Darrin, in the Bewitched series, depicts a fantasy version of this style. He is the lone mortal in a family of witches and warlocks, and his total subjugation through the malevolent magic of Endora, the hostile mother-in-law, is staved off only through the repeated interventions of his wife, Samantha. Green Acres portrays the harried life of a gentleman farmer outmaneuvered by his witless wife and the crafty folk of Hooterville. The comic incompetence of the male is the recurrent story idea of another program in this category, Mayberry, R.F.D. In one episode, fixit man Emmett Clark broke his arm and had to hire a high school boy to help in the shop. The townspeople soon

discovered that the boy was much better at repair work than Clark. In another episode, one of the main characters, Sam Jones, unsuccessfully competed with a hired farm hand for the respect and admiration of his own son.

The Tactical Male (low status/active), a favorite of aggressive black viewers, is represented by Mannix, Mission Impossible, and by certain aspects of Julia. The lead characters are all adept problem-solvers. A client is in trouble or in danger and must be rescued. One writer for the Mannix series considers Joe Mannix a "Christ figure," noting that "he really is everybody's ombudsman; he'll make it right" (quoted in TV Guide, October 31, 1970). As a consequence of his low status, however, the tactical male must work under severe handicaps. He is always in an exposed, vulnerable position: a private detective who must act aggressively without the legal authority of the police, an undercover team sent on dangerous missions behind enemy lines, a black nurse (the widowed mother of a small boy) who works for a domineering white doctor. In each case, their underdog positions require that they resort to cunning strategy and surprise rather than force and coercion.

The Tactical Male maintains close ties with others, and his band of associates includes a woman. The continuing characters on Mission Impossible form a closely-knit group of collaborators with one woman in a supporting role. Mannix depends upon his black secretary. At least one black actor appears regularly in all three series.

The Protective Male (high status/passive) describes the key adult roles in The Courtship of Eddie's Father, My Three Sons, and the Newlywed Game, three programs especially popular among non-aggressive white viewers. The emphasis of these series is the man's capacity to fill a woman's place in the family.

Eddie's Father and My Three Sons both are concerned with fathers' determined attempts to rear their motherless sons. The affectionate relationship between father and son is clearly conveyed in The Courtship of Eddie's Father. As originally conceived, the "courtship" was to denote the boy trying to fix up dad with dates every week. But as the show evolved in concept, the courtship became that between father and son. In the 26 episodes of the 1969-70 season, only twice did eight-year-old Eddie try to find a wife for his father. James Komack, the producer, considers the single parent format necessary for delving into the parent-child relationship with any depth. He said, "A woman would interfere -- would take away half the time, half the affection, half the moment" (TV Guide, July 4, 1970).

The vividness of the Protective Male style was demonstrated by Foster (1964) who found that even the most acceptable real-life fathers seemed less attractive to their sons than did the fathers portrayed on popular television series. In our study, the appeal of this style was relatively limited to white boys, however, since blacks avoided white family-type situation comedies. A similar racial pattern in program preferences was reported several years ago by Carey (1966).

The role of the Protective Male is seen in a somewhat different version in The Newlywed Game. Success in playing the game depends on the collaboration, not competition, of husband-and-wife teams. To score, a husband or wife must be able to correctly guess how the other partner answered a question. The winning team is the couple which can best take the place of each other.

The Forceful Male (high status/active) was a style attractive to white aggressive viewers. High status is accorded the male lead either because he is empowered to compel compliant behavior from others (e.g., Inspector Erskine of The FBI, officers Reed and Malloy of Adam 12), or because he is so unassailable in his independence that he alone determines his own actions (e.g., Bronson). The Forceful Male is dominating, self-sufficient, aggressively on the offensive. His response to threat is immediate and direct. There is seldom need for subterfuge or surprise.

Typically, these shows have few continuing characters and shift locales from one episode to another. The male leads are constantly on the move, and hence plot development does not depend upon complex interactions among characters. Moreover, the fictional world the Forceful Male inhabits is a man's world. No women appear regularly in any of the three series, and the roles which are assigned to women are ususally incidental. The low involvement of women characters is reminiscent of Hemingway's short story collection, Men Without Women, in which the thrills of fishing, boxing, and bull-fighting are preferred to the pleasures of women.[1]

The style of the Forceful Male further resembles a conventional Hemingway character in its associations with high adventure and violence, and its hard-sell presentation as a life style worthy of imitation. The Soames (1969) have argued that "much of the effect of observational learning depends upon the success and prestige of the model who is imitated." Heavy propaganda infuses all three series which portray the Forceful Male. The FBI is an officially sanctioned account of Bureau heroics, while Adam 12 often introduces law-and-order editorializing into its dialogue. Bronson promotes a quick getaway life style throughout each program, from the opening title vignette (which shows a man beset with the cares of middle age betraying his envy of Bronson's easy-riding freedom) to the lyrics of the closing theme: "Goin' down that long, lonesome highway... gonna live like my way...I won't be hangin' 'round." Of the four masculine styles described, The Forceful Male is the most escapist since, as Lucy Komisar (1970) has noted, "this definition of manhood can no longer exist for most men, except through the shallow medium of television."

The programs we have considered both reflect and perpetuate mass culture stereotypes of masculine roles. The popularity of these particular programs among adolescent boys is probably due to the clarity with which the male leads embody stock styles of masculine behavior. When television influences a boy to adopt one of these styles as his own, his choice serves to maintain and reinforce its viability as a model for manhood.

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[1] One consequence of a program winning popularity among white aggressive viewers may be a loss of women viewers. According to the Home Testing Institute, Adam 12 was the only program in our selection to appear among its TvQ "top ten" list of night-time network shows toward the end of the 1969-70 season. A TvQ score is the proportion of all viewers familiar with a program who single it out as one of their favorites. For each night-time network show, the Home Testing Institute releases separate TvQ scores for men and women (18 years and older), children (6-11), and teenagers (12-17). The audience strength of Adam 12 derived from the fact that it was the most popular show among teenage viewers, the second most popular among children (close behind The Wonderful World of Disney), and was one of two top-rated night-time shows more popular with men than women (Bonanza was the other). No other program on the "top ten" list, however, had a lower TvQ score among women viewers. Source: Advertising Age, July 13, 1970.

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